

Forest and Stream

New York, Saturday, April 14, 1894 VOL. XLII--No. 15

Save The Park Buffalo

It is but a short time since we announced the capture of a poacher in the National Park, and the fact that he had killed eleven buffalo, and this announcement greatly surprised and alarmed all who are interested in the National Park and all public spirited citizens as well.

In another column we quote statements contained in a private letter received from our staff correspondent in the National Park, and these statements show that the condition of things there, so far as the buffalo are concerned is infinitely worse than any one had supposed. Besides the buffalo known to have been killed by Howell, Messrs. Hough and Hofer, of *Forest and Stream Yellowstone Park Game Exploration*, discovered in another place eight buffalo carcasses scattered over the hillside and buried under 4ft. of snow. The date at which these were killed has not yet been determined, as it was impossible with the means at hand for the travelers to get to the carcasses.

There seems now to be little doubt that within the last year or two a wholesale slaughter has been taking place among our buffalo preserved in the Yellowstone Park. It was believed that these, if they had been protected, would by natural increase have reached four or five hundred by this time, but if the herd had been preyed on by poachers in other years as it has in the winter of 1893-94, we can well imagine that two hundred or two hundred and fifty is the outside limit for the buffalo in the Park.

As we stated a few days ago, Congress has put a premium on the head of every one of these great beasts. Any man is free to enter the National Park and kill them, and knows that-- even if taken in the act-- no punishment can be afflicted on him. The chances against his capture are

considerable, and even if he is taken, the only inconvenience that he suffers is a confiscation of his outfit, amounting to but a few dollars in value, and a few weeks discomfort in a guard house. Against this there is the prospect of selling for \$200 or \$300 the head of every buffalo which he has killed, and in the deep snows of winter there would be no difficulty in killing in the course of three or four days, all the buffalo in the Hayden Valley, which, as our correspondent reports, are now not more than from seventy-five to one hundred head.

It is not surprising that sportsmen and many of the newspapers of the country are stirred up about this matter, nor that a number of police bills have been introduced in Congress to remedy the existing state of things. Most of the bills introduced thus far are entirely inadequate, partly because they are drawn by persons who are not familiar with the condition of things in the Park, and are so ignorant of what is required in such a bill. It is somewhat absurd to provide the penalty of a fine of \$100 for killing a buffalo, when it is perfectly well known that if a man kills one and succeeds in getting its head out of the Park, he can obtain for it three times the amount of the possible fine. On the other hand the penalties should not be so severe as to excite sympathy for the law breaker, and so to render the law inoperative.

We have already said that these animals are Government property, and that injury to them should be punished in the same way as injury to any other Government property. The Yellowstone Park has by law been distinctly set aside as a public Park or pleasuring ground for the people, and the natural objects in it, whether animate or inanimate, belong to the public. It is the business of the Government, which acts for the

people, to protect this property which belongs to those whom it represents. The executive branch of the Government has done and is doing all in its power to furnish this protection, but the legislative branch has failed and continues to fail to do this duty, for it refuses to provide methods and means for enforcing the protection which it has authorized in the organic act establishing the Park.

We suggest that every reader of *Forest and Stream* who is interested in the Park or in natural history, or in the things pertaining to America, should write to his Senator and Representative in Congress, asking them to take an active interest in the protection of the Park. In no other way can Congress be made to feel the force of public opinion, and be induced to enact the necessary laws for the protection of the National Park.